

Story 1833 1970 Tape 16)

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The Faithless Wife and the Thrice-Killed Lover

There lived in a village an elderly man who wanted to learn about his wife's activities. One day he said to her "My wife, it is becoming more and more difficult to earn a good income by farming or doing any other work in this village. I am going to go to the nearest town and buy some goods of some kind that I can resell for a higher price and make a profit

The man went to the marketplace in the nearest town and bought a lame donkey. Then he bought a false beard and some different clothes with which to disguise himself. When he returned to his own village, neither his wife nor anyone else there recognized him. He rode up and down the streets of the village shouting, "Fortune-teller! I am a fortune-teller! I can tell you all about both your past and your future!" Whenever anyone hired him to tell that person's past and future, he would say, "This happened to you and that once happened to you, and in the future such and such will be your fate." Of course, he had known all of these people for many years, and so he really did know

about their past. People were so amazed that he knew their past that they believed whatever he told them would happen to them in the future.

His reputation as a fortune-teller spread quickly to other villages, and they sent messengers asking him to come to their villages. He answered, "All right! All right! I shall go there." And he actually did go to some of those villages for a brief time.

Back in his own village, he was approached one day by his wife, who did not, of course, recognize him. When she asked him to tell her future, he said, "Your husband has gone somewhere to buy and sell merchandise, and hopefully his business will be successful. After he returns, take very good care of him for forty days and treat him well, for on the forty-first day he will go blind." When the woman heard that, she began to look forward to the return of her husband.

The husband left his village again. He sold his lame donkey. He removed the false beard and put on his regular clothes. When he arrived home, his wife greeted him, saying, "Oh-h-h-h, welcome, my husband Where have you been for so many days?"

"You know that I went to buy certain kinds of goods

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and then sell them at a profit. That business did not go very well, however, and I earned very little money from it."

His wife then said, "We have a goose that my mother left to me. If I were to slaughter and cook that goose, would you eat it, my man?"

"How can you ask such a question, Wife? Of course I would eat it!"

The wife slaughtered the goose and cooked it. Her husband enjoyed it very much. In one way or another, his wife did something special to please him for forty days. She treated him with butter and honey.¹ When the forty-first day arrived, the man called his wife to him and said, "I have gone blind."

She replied, "Oh, my husband, you will survive this difficulty." When the man moved awkwardly and groped for things the way a blind person does, his wife said to him, "My husband, you are still young enough to learn to get along all right in your blindness." The woman pretended to be very sad that her husband had gone blind, but in fact she was glad that this had happened.

The husband now stayed at home all the time. One day

¹A colloquial expression meaning to pamper someone.

he heard a noise downstairs, and he asked his wife, "What is that sound I hear downstairs?"

"That is Mehmet from your uncle's household. He has come here

"Oh, I should recognize his voice even though I could not see him. Send that good-for-nothing fellow up here to talk with me." The visitor went upstairs, but it was not to talk with the husband. It was to make love with his wife. The husband, however, was ready for them. He stood behind the door with a hatchet in his hand. He struck the lover on the head with the hatchet, and then he also killed his wife.

The husband then began to wonder how to dispose of the two dead bodies. Waiting until it grew dark that evening, he took his wife to a nearby forest and hid her body in a thick tangle of brush. Then, placing the body of the dead lover in a sack, he carried it to a tavern. The place was closed by then, but he shouted to the bartender, who lived above the tavern, "Bartender! Bartender!"

"What is the matter?" asked the bartender.

"Open the door! I want to buy some rakı."²

²Rakı is the favorite distilled liquor in Turkey. It is a clear, anise-flavored liquor. When added to water, it turns white and is called "lion's milk." This same liquor is known in Arab lands as arak, and in some Balkan lands as ouzu.

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"No! I am already in bed, and I shall not come down for you now," answered the bartender.

"Well, if you do not, I shall hang myself here on your front door!"

The husband took the dead body out of the sack. He placed a rope around its neck and hung it from one of the hinges on the door.

When the husband said nothing further, the bartender became alarmed. He said to his wife, "Woman, get up, for the sake of Allah! That fellow below has become silent. I don't want him to hang himself there!" But when he opened the front door, he found the corpse of the lover hanging there. He took down the corpse and hid it in a corner until he could decide what to do with it.

Toward morning a group of miners came along with a caravan of donkeys loaded with coal which they had dug from a mountain near that village. As they were passing by the tavern, the bartender put the dead man upon the back of one of the donkeys near the end of the caravan

As it began to get lighter outside, one of the miners noticed this and shouted, "Mehmet, there is someone riding on your donkey!"

Mehmet said to the corpse, "Hey, brother, get down

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from that donkey!" As the donkey walked along, its movement caused the corpse's head to flop up and down, as if it were saying, "No!"³ Because the corpse remained on the donkey as it passed, the animal's owner swore at the rider. When the miners discovered that the rider was dead, they decided to throw him from a bridge that lay along their route

After the corpse had been thrown into the river below, it floated some distance downstream. It finally reached a place where a hunter was waiting for migrating wild ducks to land. He had one of his own domestic ducks swimming about there to serve as a decoy to lure passing wild ducks to that place. Seeing the man floating down the river toward him, the hunter called angrily, "Couldn't you have found some other place to wash yourself?" Since the corpse did not answer but continued to come closer and closer, the hunter became so angry that he shot the intruder. Because he thought that he had killed the man in the water, the hunter picked up his decoy and ran home.

³Besides the words which mean No, there is a Turkish gesture which also means No. In this gesture the head is tilted back suddenly, and this movement is sometimes accompanied by a Tst! sound.